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Safety Belt Use by African Americans Registers Sharp Increase to Record Level

By Ellen Martin,
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March 10, 2003. Washington, DC. Safety belt use among African Americans registered a major gain between 2000 and 2002, increasing to essentially the same level as that of the general population, according to estimates from a major survey conducted by NHTSA.

NHTSA Administrator Dr. Jeff Runge released the new data during a speech before the Lifesavers 2003 conference in Chicago. Also at the conference, the largest annual gathering of highway safety professionals, Dr. Runge presented 14 NHTSA awards for public service.

The latest NHTSA survey indicates that African Americans currently use safety belts 77 percent of the time, an eight percentage point increase since 2000 and the highest level reported since the agency began conducting such surveys nine years ago. The comparable figure for the overall U.S. population is now 75 percent.

"These numbers are the result of years of hard work by our traffic safety partners in the African American community. This is extremely heartening," Dr. Runge said, "and will quickly result in fewer deaths and injuries to our citizens." Gains in safety belt use by African Americans are attributable to a significant degree to efforts by the Meharry Medical College, the Blue Ribbon Panel To Increase Seat Belt Use Among African Americans, and to a number of African American organizations that implemented the panel's recommendations, Dr. Runge said.

In addition to other findings from the survey, the new NHTSA statistics indicate that the gender gap for safety belt use is narrowing, although males still lag females by seven percentage points. That compares with a 10 percentage point difference in 2000. Males are now restrained 72 percent of the time, while

females use safety belts 79 percent of the time. The latest NHTSA survey also shows a significant improvement in safety belt use among youths. Those in the group age 8 to 15 years were restrained 82 percent of the time in the 2002 survey. The most comparable estimate from the previous survey for 2000 showed that 66 percent of youths age 5 to 15 were buckled up.

In February, NHTSA reported that restraint use among young children rose to a

record level in 2002. An estimated 99 percent of infants under age one are now restrained, up 4 percentage points from 2000. Fully 94 percent of toddlers are now restrained, a 3 percentage point gain over two years ago. The latest statistics indicate that 83 percent of children ages four to seven are restrained. No comparable statistics are available for this age group from previous NHTSA surveys.

Restraint use estimates are based on the

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NHTSA Announces Final Model Year 2005–2007 Fuel Economy Standards for Light Trucks

By Tim Hurd,
Office of Communications and
Consumer Information

April 2, 2003. NHTSA announced it will increase the corporate average fuel economy (CAFE) standards for light trucks by 1.5 miles per gallon (mpg) over the next three years, thus saving more than 3.6 billion gallons of gas over the lifetime of the trucks affected.

Under the new rule, the current standard of 20.7 mpg will increase to 21.0 mpg for Model Year 2005, 21.6 mpg for MY 2006, and 22.2 mpg for MY 2007. The *final rule* adopts the proposed standards that were issued by NHTSA in December and apply to pickup trucks, vans, and sport utility vehicles.

"This increase represents the first increase since MY 1996 and is the greatest increase in fuel economy standards in the last 20 years," said Administrator Runge.

Today's action marks the first increase in fuel economy standards since CAFE standards were frozen by Congress for six years through a provision in DOT's annual appropriations acts. "The Bush administration is committed to improving vehicle fuel economy while

protecting passenger safety and American jobs," Dr. Runge said.

NHTSA's economic analysis shows that this rule results in a net benefit to consumers through better fuel economy. The new fuel economy standards for light trucks are just one component of the Bush Administration's comprehensive approach to improve vehicle fuel economy, Dr. Runge said. To encourage Americans to buy more fuel efficient vehicles, the President proposed tax incentives for the purchase of hybrid vehicles. In his State of the Union speech, the President also proposed \$1.2 billion in research funding so that America can lead the world in developing hydrogen-powered automobiles. For model years beyond those covered in the *final rule*, NHTSA said it plans to consider new ways to administer the CAFE program, including modifications in the classification of vehicles and methods of measuring fuel economy.

The final rule for MY 2005–2007 light trucks is available to the public in the DOT docket (Docket Number NHTSA 02-11419). The rule is also posted on the Internet and can be viewed after searching for this docket number at www.dms.dot.gov. ■

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National Occupant Protection Use Survey (NOPUS), conducted periodically by NHTSA. The latest survey was conducted in June 2002 and its results were compared with a prior NOPUS survey done in the fall of 2000, which also tracked safety belt use among various demographic groups.

Additional key findings of the latest NOPUS survey include the following:

- Safety belt use among young people ages 16 to 24 remained constant between 2000 and 2002 at 69 percent, the lowest level of use for any age group.
- Belt use among those in rural areas increased to 73 percent in 2002, a 5 percentage point gain.
- Males riding in pickup trucks are restrained only 65 percent of the time, compared with 74 percent in other types of vehicles. Females are restrained 80 percent of the time in passenger cars, 82 percent in vans and sport utility vehicles, and 71 percent in pickup trucks.

NHTSA has been gathering NOPUS statistics on restraint use since 1994. The latest numbers were derived from a survey conducted during a 20-day period beginning on June 3, 2002. NHTSA data collectors observed 37,900 vehicles at 1,100 intersections throughout the United States. In the course of the survey, they observed 37,900 drivers and 11,600 passengers. These included 38,100 whites, 6,000 African Americans and 5,400 other individuals.

The margin of error for the survey on restraint use is plus or minus 4.4 percentage points for African Americans, 3.2 percentage points for whites, and 3.8 for other racial groups. The newly released NHTSA survey results are summarized in a research note on the agency's Website at: www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/airbags/seatbelts.htm/Demographics.html.

In addition to releasing the latest statistics on safety belt use at the Lifesavers Conference in Chicago, Dr. Runge presented the 2003 NHTSA Awards for Public Service to the following individuals and organizations:

- **Chief William Berger of the North Miami Beach, FL Police Department.** As the Immediate Past President of the International Association of Chiefs of Police, Chief Berger provided national leadership to engage law enforcement in traffic safety initiatives.
- **Chief John Coffey of the Pennsauken, NJ Police Department.** Chief Coffey has shown his commitment to keeping impaired drivers off New Jersey roadways.
- **Illinois State Sen. John Cullerton.** Senator Cullerton championed highway safety programs and legislation in Illinois.
- **Sgt. Merl Evans of the Ridgely, MD Police Department.** Sgt. Evans provided

commitment and creativity to the promotion of highway safety in Maryland.

- **Robert S. Hall, Ed.D. of New Orleans.** Dr. Hall volunteered his time and energy to reducing the incidence of motor vehicle crashes in Louisiana through many years of volunteer work to educate the public, law enforcement and students on the tragedy of unsafe driving.
- **Lt. William L. ("Luther") Hires of the Jessup, GA Police Department.** Lt. Hires provided leadership, dedication and commitment to reducing crashes, injuries, and fatalities on Georgia's roadways.
- **Deb Hubsmith of San Anselmo, CA, Executive Director of the Marin County Bicycle Coalition.** Ms. Hubsmith showed her initiative by creating a comprehensive Safe Routes to School program for 21 schools in Marin County.
- **Richard Hunt, M.D. of Syracuse, NY, Past President of the National Association of Emergency Medical Services Physicians and Chair, Department of Emergency Medicine, SUNY Upstate Medical University.** Dr. Hunt's vision and leadership were instrumental in realizing the potential of emergency medical services for the benefit of public health and safety.
- **Jeff Linkenbach, Ed.D., Director, Montana Social Norms Project, Montana State University, Bozeman, MT.** Dr. Linkenbach advanced statewide social norms research strategies to reduce impaired driving and increase safety belt use.

- **Washington State Representative John Lovick of Olympia, WA.** Rep. Lovick demonstrated superior commitment to public safety through legislative accomplishments, including sponsorship of a primary safety belt law for the State of Washington.
 - **Mairi Nelson, Public Information Officer, Colorado Department of Transportation, Denver.** Ms. Nelson dedicated herself to improving the safety of Colorado's roadways by organizing high-profile safety campaigns to increase safety belt use and decrease impaired driving.
 - **Neil Smith, Buckle Up America 5K Run/Walk program, Blue Springs, MO.** The Neil Smith Family dedicated itself to increasing safety belt use through the Buckle Up America 5K Run/Walk program, designed to encourage individuals to save the lives of friends and family.
 - **Tomi St. Mars, Injury Prevention Coordinator, Desert Samaritan Medical Center, Mesa, AZ.** Ms. St. Mars displayed initiative in partnering with the Indian Health Services and the Arizona Governor's Office of Highway Safety to implement a child passenger safety curriculum for Native American tribes and communities across the United States.
 - **Vermont Click It or Ticket Team.** The Vermont Highway Safety Agency led the creation of a strong partnership between itself, state and local police, and county sheriffs for a highly publicized enforcement mobilization, which achieved a 19 percent increase in safety belt use during May 2002.
- NHTSA was grateful for this opportunity to express its sincere appreciation to these dedicated individuals and organizations for the difference they have made. ■



March 5, 2003. Capitol Hill. NHTSA Administrator Dr. Jeff Runge came prepared to "stump the chumps" from *Car Talk* during NPR's Capitol Hill reception. The kings of cardom, also known as Tom and Ray Magliozzi, were in DC to cap off a day of

Capitol Hill visits by NPR's member station managers. Before arriving at the reception, Dr. Runge polled NHTSA's engineers to come up with a suitably convoluted (but real) car question. The guys didn't get the answer right—but their executive producer did! ■

soberRide Boston/Cambridge: A Winner All Around!

By Edwina Cloherty, Region I

While still in its infancy, soberRide Boston/Cambridge recently won the Outstanding Public Service – Public Sector Award from the Association for Commuter Transportation, Patriot Chapter at its New England Transportation Demand Conference on April 3rd at Boston's World Trade Center. Jane O'Donoghue, Senior Vice President, Corporate Communications, AT&T Wireless (soberRide's primary national sponsor), congratulated the young partnership for its dual accomplishments. Adding his congratulations, John Moulden, President of the National Commission Against Drunk Driving (NCADD) remarked: "I'm proud to be associated with this outstanding group of individuals and organizations."

SoberRide, created about fifteen years ago by the Washington (DC) Regional Alcohol Program, offers free cab rides home to would-be impaired drivers during traditionally high-risk holiday periods. Its two-fold mission: raise awareness of the dangers of drunk driving; encourage and support the making of responsible choices by providing the public a safe transportation alternative. SoberRide gained national momentum last year through a partnership between the NCADD and AT&T Wireless, its primary national sponsor.

Inaugurated on New Year's Eve 2002 as Cambridge soberRide, the locally organized group expanded to Boston/Cambridge soberRide for St. Patrick's Day, joining the

national coalition now operating in six U.S. cities on most major holidays.

In addition to AT&T Wireless, its partners include Ambassador/Brattle and Yellow Cab Company of Cambridge, Boston's Black Rose Bar & Restaurant, Boston Cab Dispatch, Inc., the City of Cambridge License Commission, the Massachusetts Brain Injury Association, the Massachusetts Emergency Nurses Association, the Massachusetts Governor's Highway Safety Bureau, the Massachusetts Safety Council, and the

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Region I. SoberRide relies on the partnership and support of the entire community, government, business and the media.

The Boston/Cambridge soberRide program is pleased and fortunate to have local financial sponsorship from Diageo of North America and the Massachusetts Emergency Nurses Association, thus making possible three events this year: St. Patrick's Day, the 4th of July and New Year's Eve. The committee appreciates their commitment and welcomes more business participation. Without a doubt, Greater Boston benefited, with nearly 200 rides given and more than fifteen hundred miles traveled.

Contact the Massachusetts Safety Council at 781-356-1633 for more information. ■



Pictured left to right: Joe Silva, owner of Ambassador-Brattle Cab Company; Edwina Cloherty, RPM, NHTSA, Region I; Michael Sullivan, Mayor, Cambridge, MA; and Marty Nee, AT&T Wireless, Director, Corporate Communications, New England.

Dave Bryson Receives Volunteer Firefighter Of the Year Award



The Central Fairfax Chamber of Commerce selected David Bryson, of the NHTSA EMS Division, as the 2002 Volunteer Firefighter of the Year for the Fairfax City, VA Fire Department.

David Bryson, a volunteer Assistant Chief, was recognized for improving the Department's training program, for creating and heading the Department's recruitment and retention committee, and for coordinating the Department's numerous public service and fundraising efforts throughout the year. Congratulations, David! ■

Trucking Industry Behind *Click It or Ticket* in New York

March 26, 2003. Poughkeepsie, New York. Region II Administrator Tom Louizou announced a new *Click It or Ticket* initiative where the trucking industry will help promote *Click It or Ticket* in the State. More than 1500 trucks and buses representing small and large companies will become "moving billboards" promoting the *Click It or Ticket* campaign in the Empire State. Among the larger companies who agreed to display 24" X 24" NHTSA CIOT placards were: Leroy Holding Company of Albany, NY; Kodak Company of Rochester, NY; and Package Pavement Company of Stormville, NY. The New York State Truckers' Association helped broker the deal and promoted the availability of the placards to their membership. ■



Pictured, left to right: Richard Sniffen, NY State Dept. of Taxation and Finance; Thomas M. Louizou, NHTSA Region II Administrator; Raymond P. Martinez, NY State Dept. of Motor Vehicles and Governor's Representative for Highway Safety; Donald F. Dessureau, Safety Director, Leroy Holding Company; Kendra Pollard, NY State Motor Trucking Association Deputy Director; Brian Temperine, FMCSA, NY Division Administrator.

On the Road with the Occupant Protection Division

By Carole S. Guzzetta,
Occupant Protection Division

A positive result of NHTSA's recent re-organization brought the offices of Program Development and Delivery, and Injury Control Operations and Resources under the roof of Traffic Injury Control. To help enhance communications and strengthen partnerships, the Occupant Protection Division (OPD) and NHTSA's Region III office held a joint

meeting on March 13, 2003.

The OPD traveled to downtown Baltimore to meet their colleagues and get a true sense of what life is like in the region and vice versa. The day was spent sharing information about the responsibilities of the respective offices and then all participants had an opportunity to highlight their programs and expertise. Everyone felt that the opportunity to meet and share ideas and experiences was very beneficial. ■



OPD and NHTSA Region III staff take a moment from their meeting to smile for the camera.

Hot Off the Press....



Buying a Safer Car for Child Passengers 2003 and *Buying a Safer Car 2003* are now available. This is the 6th year that AAA and NHTSA have jointly published the "Buying a Safer Car for Child Passengers" brochure. The brochure offers a family car checklist with safety features to consider when purchasing a new car.

Safety features include manual air bag on-off switch, rear center lap/shoulder belt, built-in child safety seats, and adjustable upper belts (rear). The brochure will also be published in Spanish.

Published since 1995, "Buying a Safer Car" provides information to consumers on how current model year vehicles protect drivers and passengers in frontal and side crashes. The rollover resistance rating for vehicles is also provided as an estimate of your risk of rolling over if you have a single vehicle crash. The brochure also provides basic information on vehicle safety features and how they work.

Limited copies are available by faxing a request at 301-386-2194, or on the web at www.nhtsa.dot.gov. ■

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Kathryn Henry
Editor

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If you would like to submit articles or photographs, please email them to khenry@nhtsa.dot.gov; or mail them to 400 7th Street, SW., Suite 5232, Washington DC 20590.

Region II Recognizes CFC Champion

The Combined Federal Campaign of Westchester and Putnam Counties recently recognized Beatrice Petrina for her generous support, time, and tireless effort in working with federal facilities. Ms. Petrina serves as a U.S. Department of Transportation, Loaned Executive for Federal Workers. ■



Beatrice Petrina, Administrative Staff Assistant and Thomas Louizou, Region II Administrator

NHTSA and FHWA Award \$40 Million in Grants to Improve Safety Belt Usage—Support Local Law Enforcement.

During the week of March 24, NHTSA and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) announced the award of \$40 million in grants to states to support innovative programs proposed by the states to increase safety belt use. It is expected that a significant portion of the funds will be used to support *Click It or Ticket* campaigns for stepped-up safety belt enforcement. These campaigns pay dividends that reach beyond safety belts alone. For example, a two-week *Click It or Ticket* campaign in eight southern states in 2001 resulted in the arrest of 1,471 fugitives, the recovery of 254 stolen cars, and the removal of 8,478 impaired drivers from the roads. ■

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"One of the false dichotomies of modern life is that between work and personal time. It is widely held that there is a set of skills that we need for one and quite a different set that we need for the other. But this is not true. The skills of problem-solving, for example are of great value in our personal lives, and overcoming stress and anxiety is a key skill in our work. Being fair to yourself, and to others, helps both personal and work relationships. Low mood is a major cause of unhappiness and also reduces effectiveness at work."

—Samuel Butler, novelist, essayist, painter and composer